

Opening Remarks
Jon Lindborg, USAID Mission Director
Launching of the Judicial Reform Index Report
Ballroom (7/F), Pan Pacific Hotel, Manila
September 21, 2006, 2:00 p.m.

Honorable Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban
Justices of the Supreme Courts
Distinguished guests
Ladies and gentlemen

Magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat.

I am delighted to join you this afternoon in the launching of the Judicial Reform Index (JRI) Report. I particularly would like to congratulate the Supreme Court of the Philippines, the Project Management Office, the American Bar Association - Asia Law Initiative (ABA-Asia) and Judge Evelyn Lance, the author of the report we are launching today, for a job well done.

The U.S. Government, thru the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) supported the development and publication of the JRI report. We did this through ABA-Asia, at the request of the Supreme Court late last year. Why? Because we strongly support the Philippine judiciary's continued efforts under Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban to implement court reforms.

The JRI is an assessment tool designed to examine a cross-section of factors important to judicial reform in emerging democracies. While it has been applied in a number of Eastern European and former Soviet Union countries, this is the first time that the JRI was used in the Asia region.

Assessing a country's progress towards judicial reform is fraught with challenges. No single criterion may serve as an absolute indicator of success, and many commonly considered factors are difficult to quantify.

Nevertheless, I understand that Judge Lance did a remarkable job in assessing thirty (30) factors that facilitate the development of an accountable, effective, and independent judiciary and assigning them one of three values: positive, neutral, or negative.

As noted in the JRI report we are launching this afternoon, the Philippines scored positively on nine factors related to the quality, education and diversity of the judiciary, code of judicial ethics, and guaranteed tenure. The report also mentioned eleven neutral (11) factors particularly in the areas of adequacy of judicial salaries, as well as most factors related to judicial powers, structural safeguards for the judiciary, and transparency of the judicial system. Finally, the report cited nine (9) factors where the Philippines scored negatively, including most factors related to financial resources and efficiency of justice.

Hopefully, the Philippine judiciary and the donor community will find the report useful in better targeting judicial reform programs and monitoring progress towards establishing an accountable, effective, and independent judiciary.

I am sure that you are all looking forward to hearing Judge Lance's presentation where she will highlight some specific results and the basis for her conclusions.

In closing, let me just reiterate that the U.S. Government and the American people are honored to support the efforts of Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban to sustain reforms in the judiciary, particularly in addressing, to use his own words, the ACID problems of: a) limited **access** to justice by the poor, b) **corruption**, c) **incompetence**, and d) **delay** in the delivery of quality judgments.

Once again, congratulations to all those who made this event possible.

Maraming Salamat po at mabuhay tayong lahat!